

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7162

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TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: PARTI NATIONAL POPULAIRE (DU QUEBEC)

1. IT MAY HAVE NO LONG-RANGE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE BUT BE WORTHY OF NOTE THAT AT THE ANNUAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE NEW YEAR RECEPTION LAST EVENING (AT WHICH THERE MUST HAVE BEEN WELL OVER 500 GUESTS) A STEADY STREAM OF PEOPLE MADE A POINT OF PRESENTING THEMSELVES TO JEROME CHOQUETTE, PUTATIVE LEADER OF THE NEW (QUEBEC) PARTI NATIONAL POPULAIRE. SOME WERE CLEARLY OLD FRIENDS BUT THE GREAT MAJORITY WERE INTRODUCING THEMSELVES AS THEY SHOOK HANDS, MUCH LIKE A POLITICAL GATHERING ANYWHERE.

2. CHOQUETTE WAS IN AN EXUBERANT MOOD AND TOLD THE CONSUL GENERAL THAT THE PARTY HAD GAINED SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT--MORE THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED AT SUCH AN EARLY DATE. HE SAID THIS WAS NOT ONLY RESPONSE TO A FELT NEED FOR AN ALTERNATIVE TO A DISCREDITED LIBERAL REGIME AND/OR THE PARTI QUEBECOIS BUT ALSO A REFLECTION OF A RISING TIDE OF CONSERVATISM THAT IS "FINDING EXPRESSION EVERYWHERE IN THE WORLD."

3. CHOQUETTE DID NOT COMMENT AT THE TIME ON HIS SOLUTION TO THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT (WHICH LED TO HIS RESIGNATION FROM THE CABINET AND THE LIBERAL PARTY) AS REPORTED IN TODAY'S GAZETTE. ACCORDING TO THIS REPORT, HE SAID THAT BOTH ANGLO-PHONES AND FRANCOPHONES HAVE A RIGHT TO THEIR RESPECTIVE
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EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS, ADDING THAT "BOTH GROUPS SHOULD HAVE EARLY TEACHING OF THE OTHER LANGUAGE IN ORDER TO MAKE OUR

CHILDREN FLUENT", AS ENGLISH QUEBECERS MUST ACCEPT THE FRENCH MAJORITY AND FRANCOPHONES MUST BE EQUIPPED TO FACE LIFE IN MONTREAL, NORTH AMERICA AND THE WORLD. HE WENT ON TO SAY, ACCORDING TO THE GAZETTE, THAT NON-ANGLOPHONE IMMIGRANTS ALREADY IN QUEBEC SHOULD ALSO BE ALLOWED TO SEND THEIR CHILDREN TO ENGLISH SCHOOLS.

4. TODAY'S MONTREAL STAR HAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT VERSION OF HIS REMARKS (GIVEN TO AN ANGLOPHONE BUSINESSMEN'S MEETING). EMPHASIS HEREIN IS ON BOURASSA CABINET REFUSAL TO COME TO GRIPS WITH INEQUITIES IN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE ACT AND DEFENSE OF HIS ACTS AS EDUCATION MINISTER. STAR DOES NOT MENTION "POLICY" TOWARD IMMIGRANTS ALREADY HERE BUT GIVES SUBSTANTIAL, PRESUMABLY VERBATIM, COVERAGE TO CONCEPT THAT NEW IMMIGRANT CHILDREN MUST GO TO FRENCH SCHOOLS. THUS, NON-ANGLOPHONE IMMIGRANTS WOULD BE TOLD OF THE PROVINCE'S LANGUAGE POLICY IN ADVANCE AND "IF THEY DECIDE TO COME, THEY COME, IF THEY DON'T, THEY DON'T." (THIS IS NOT INCONSISTENT WITH THE EARLIER REPORT BUT IS A REVERSAL IN EMPHASIS.)

5. COMMENT: IF CHOQUETTE HIMSELF, REGARDLESS OF MEDIA, CONTINUES GIVE PROMINENCE TO MIDDLE-GROUND POSTURE ON LANGUAGE ISSUE IN DIRECT ADDRESSES TO ANGLPHONE OR NEO-CANADIAN AUDIENCES, IT MAY DO MUCH TO OVERCOME THEIR OBJECTIONS TO HIM THAT AROSE WHEN HE WAS A HARD-LINER AS EDUCATION MINISTER. HE HAS, AT LEAST, MOVED MORE THAN A STEP FROM THE PQ POSITION ON THE MATTER.
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